

Agape Love For Others

“³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jo. 13:34-35).

Jesus gave new commandment. Believers are called upon to love one another like a family. Loving one another is in part what makes someone a disciple.

Ten Ways a Love Others.

- (1) Forgive those who have hurt you. As a role model for all believers, Jesus forgave those who crucified Him while He hung on the cross dying a painful death. “But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’” (Lk. 23:24(a)). Just as Jesus forgave those who hurt them, you too are called upon to forgive those who have hurt you: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” (Matt. 5:7). “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.” (Lk. 6:37). “A man’s discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.” (Prov. 19:11). “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” (Eph. 4:32). “bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” (Col. 3:13). Is there anyone you need to forgive?
 - Forgiveness should be granted liberally and often. Jesus warned that you should grant forgiveness liberally and often: “Then Peter came and said to Him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’” (Matt. 18:21-22). If someone has committed an unforgivable sin against you or a loved one, Jesus still calls upon you to forgive. When you forgive the unforgivable, you too will release your pent-up pain. Is there some who has committed a sin against you that you believe cannot be forgiven.
 - God will forgive your sins when you forgive others. Jesus also warns that you must forgive others to be able to receive God the Father’s forgiveness: “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” (Matt. 6:14-15). “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.” (Mk. 11:26). Thus, if you are looking for God’s forgiveness, don’t delay in forgiving others.
- (2) A transformed believer provides for the needy. Loving others also includes a desire to help others in need: “⁹‘Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.’” (Lev. 19:9-10.)

In the Old Testament, God required that the poor be allowed to glean the fields so that they would not go hungry. (Ex. 23:10-13; Lev. 23:22; Dt. 24:19-21.) The landowners were also required to allow the fields to lie fallow on the seventh year to both heal the land and to allow the poor to harvest the fruit on the fallowed fields. (Ex. 23:10-13.) Helping others in need is part of Christ's summary of the Second Half of the Ten Commandments: "You should love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:39-40.) God exhorts that every believer: "Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." (Is. 1:17.) "Vindicate the weak and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and destitute." (Ps. 82:3.) Throughout the Bible, God also exhorts believers to take care of the poor: "The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern." (Prov. 31:9; 29:7; 14:31; 31:9; Ps. 82:3; Dt. 15:7-8.) "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you." (Matt. 5:44.) "But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind," (Luke 14:13.) "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17.) On the Day of Judgment, Jesus will ask what each person did for the poor and the needy. (Matt. 25:40.) In heaven, will you have much to discuss with Jesus about how you helped the poor and the needy?

- (3) Love your neighbor by dealing fairly with them. Another sign of a loving others is the desire to be honest in your dealings with others: "¹¹ 'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.'" (Lev. 19:11; Ex. 23:1-2.) Stealing violates the Eighth Commandment. (Ex. 20:15; Dt. 5:19; Eph. 4:28.) Lying violates the Ninth Commandment. (Ex. 20:16; Dt. 5:20.) Lies are one of the things that God "hates." "There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: . . . a lying tongue, and . . . a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers." (Prov. 6:16-19.) "Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal faithfully are His delight." (Prov. 22:22.) Satan is the father of all liars. When you lie, you are under his influence: "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. . . . Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44.) Are you honest in all your personal and business dealings with others?
- (4) Love others by being trustworthy and faithful to keep your word. A believer is an ambassador for Christ. (2 Cor. 5:20.) A believer who breaks his or her word misrepresents what it means to be a believer. Thus, believers are warned: "¹² 'You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.'" (Lev. 19:12; Dt. 6:13.) Falsely swearing violates the Third Commandment. (Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11.) For this reason, Jesus warns us that the consequences of a broken vow to God are so serious that we should not carelessly make them. (Matt. 5:33-36.) When you do make a vow, Jesus exhorts you to be a person of your word: "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil." (Matt. 5:37.) Do you casually break your word after making commitments to others?
- (5) Love others by treating others who you employ or supervise fairly. A transformed believer also takes proper care of those who their hire or supervise: "¹³ 'You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.'" (Lev. 19:13.) "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy,

whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you.” (Dt. 24:14-15; Jer. 22:13.) “Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath.” (Jam. 5:4; 1 Tim. 5:18; Matt. 20:8.) Are you fair and generous to those whom you hire or supervise?

- (6) Love others by doing nothing that would stumble another person. The love of Jesus should also prompt a believer to avoid taking advantage of others or cause others to stumble in their walk: “¹⁴You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.” (Lev. 19:14.) Anyone who misleads the blind is cursed: “‘Cursed is he who misleads a blind person on the road.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’” (Dt. 27:18.) If you mislead the spiritually blind, you do Satan’s work: “When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.” (Matt. 5:37.) A believer must make sure that he or she does not cause another to stumble because of their own sins: “[B]ut rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.” (Ro. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:9, 13.) Any time your mind is focused on your concerns as opposed to the concerns of God your flesh can cause others to stumble: “But [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’” (Matt. 16:23.) Paul initially persecuted those who followed the Christ. Yet, Christianity would not be the same if the early Church “cursed” Paul for his initial blindness. God knows that His seeds do not turn into trees overnight. Are you being patient with new converts when they stumble? Are you doing things in your walk that might cause others to stumble?
- (7) Love others by being impartial between the rich and poor. You can show Jesus’ love by being impartial between the rich and the poor: “¹⁵‘You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.’” (Lev. 19:15.) “[N]or shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute.” (Ex. 23:3.) “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” (John 7:24.) The people of Israel chose Saul as their first king because they liked his outward appearances. He was “a choice and handsome man.” (1 Sam. 9:2.) Yet, inside he was corrupt. God later killed him when he turned to a medium for guidance. (1 Chron. 10:13.) If John the Baptist came to you in rags while eating locusts, would you listen to him?
- (8) Love others by guarding your tongue from harming others. You can also show Jesus’ love by doing nothing to cause injury to the reputation of another with an unbridled tongue: “¹⁶‘You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, . . .’” (Lev. 19:16(a).) A “slanderer” is someone who has been given over to a depraved mind. (Rom. 1:30; 2 Cor. 12:20.) The Bible also warns that a “slanderer” is a “fool” (Prov. 10:18) who separates “intimate friends.” (Prov. 16:28.) “He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend.” (Ps. 15:3; 14:5; Ex. 23:1.) “He who speaks truth tells what is right, but a false witness, deceit.” (Prov. 2:17; 24:28.) “Like a club and a sword and a sharp arrow is a man who bears false witness against his

neighbor.” (Prov. 5:18; 25:18.) “These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another . . .” (Zech. 8:16; 3:13.) “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.” (Eph. 4:25.) “So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.” (Jam. 3:5-6.) When others hurt you, do you spread gossip about them?

(9) Love others by avoiding causing physical harm to others. A transformed believer also shows Jesus’ love by avoiding things that might lead to physical harm to others: “¹⁶ ‘You shall . . . not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD.’” (Lev. 19:16(b).) Even if another person tries to harm you, Jesus advises you not to fight back: “But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.” (Matt. 5:39; Lk. 6:29.) Let God judge those who harm you: “Do not say, ‘I will repay evil’; wait for the LORD, and He will save you.” (Prov. 20:22.) “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.” (Ro. 12:17(a), 12:19; 1 Pet. 3:9.) Are you allowing your flesh to cause harm to those who hurt you?

10) Love others includes loving your enemies. A transformed believer also loves their enemies: “¹⁷ ‘You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.’” (Lev. 19:17-18; Ex. 23:4-5; Prov. 25:21.) “I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matt. 5:43-44; Lk. 6:27-28; Rom. 12:20; Jo. 13:34.) Are you praying for God to forgive those who hate you and for those who have caused you harm?

Be obedient to God’s Word. Jesus revealed that obeying His new commandment was a sign of being one of His disciples (Jo. 13:35). He also says that, if we love Him, we will keep His commandments: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (Jo. 14:15, 21; 15:10; 1 Jo. 5:3; 2 Jo. 1:6.) “[I]f you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Matt. 19:17.) Jesus came to correct people’s motives. He wants you to be motivated by love and not obligation. He therefore summarized the Ten Commandments as something that comes naturally once a person loves the Lord and his or her neighbor. (Matt. 22:35-38; Luke 10:27, quoting Dt. 6:5.) Moses told taught us to live obediently as it is written. Jesus taught us to love obediently as it is written. Whether we keep the commandments out of love (and not obligation) is also the test regarding whether we “know” Jesus: “By this we know that we have come to *know* Him, if we keep His commandments.” (1 John 2:3.) Some will come to Jesus boasting of their works or compliance with the law. Yet, if their works or their compliance with the law was not motivated by a love for Jesus, He will respond “I never *knew* you.” (Matt. 7:23.) Is there any area in your life where you are being disobedient to Him? Or, are you obeying with the wrong motives?